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ABSTRACT

During the first 6 months of 1996, a task force of teachers, administrators, and community members in the Lane Education Service District (Eugene, Oregon) studied issues and practices related to teaching about religion in public school classrooms. The task force sought to develop a framework for teaching about religion and its appropriate inclusion in the curriculum and to develop a list of resources for school-district use and support. This handbook, a product of the task force, discusses points of special concern, provides answers to frequently asked questions about religion in the curriculum, offers a framework for curriculum content, and offers recommendations for teachers' professional development. Appendices contain examples of legal support for two approaches to defining religion, policy guidelines, a position statement and guidelines from the National Council for the Social Studies, and a summary of the Williamsburg Charter principles. The resource section contains lists of publications, visual material, media kits, organizations, and curriculum projects. (LMI)

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An Educator's Handbook

For

Teaching About Religion

in

Public Schools

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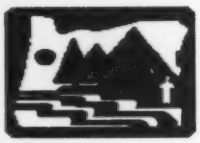

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AN EDUCATOR'S HANDBOOK

FOR
TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION
IN
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Developed by a Task Force

on

Religion In the Schools

for

Lane Education Service District

June,1996

Sara Jane Bates, Director

An Educator's Handbook for Teaching About Religion in Public Schools

I. Introduction

A group of teachers, administrators, and community members, designated by Lane County school district superintendents, met during January - June, 1996 to study issues and practices related to teaching about religion in public school classrooms.

Task force members included:

- Tom Alderman, Attorney at Law, Eugene, Oregon
- Lee Edwards, Superintendent, Mapleton School District 32
- Bob Lady, Director of Curriculum, Bethel School District 52
- Rae LaMarche, Teacher, Springfield School District 19
- Ed Larsen, Teacher, Blachly School District 90
- Vivian Moen, Curriculum Specialist, Lane Education Service District
- Marilyn Olson, Curriculum Specialist, Lane Education Service District
- Bette Shoemaker, Curriculum Coordinator, Eugene School District 4J
- Doug Smyth, Minister, First Congregational Church, Eugene, Oregon
- Kathy White, Family Development Specialist, Lane Education Service District

The group's task was two-fold:

1. Develop a framework for teaching about religion and its appropriate inclusion in the curriculum.

2. Develop a list of resources that districts can use to help clarify issues about religion and to assist with program and policy development.

II. Points of Special Concern

From discussions and findings, the following five areas of caution were noted:

First, schools should be especially sensitive to the **developmental differences** between elementary and secondary school students. Subjects or teaching methods that may be appropriate for secondary students may not be appropriate for younger children.

Second, according to Whittier[1] "a recurring problem in discussions on teaching religion in the schools is the quest for an adequate, comprehensive, and practical **definition of religion**." Definitions given are generally described as "broad" or "narrow" and reflect the diversity that is now encompassed by the word "religion."[2]

> "Narrow" definitions of religion typically stress the relation of the individual to a supreme being, institutionalized beliefs and formal worship. "Broad" definitions, on the other hand, treat as religious any beliefs having to do with matters of "ultimate" concern--"the big questions," such as the meaning of life and humankind's place in the universe. (See Section IV: Appendix for legal background.)

Third, for the purposes of this document, "**teaching about religion**" includes study of the following[3]:

- the beliefs, practices, and common characteristics of major world religions,
- the role of religion in history and contemporary society,
- religious expressions found in cultural traditions such as art, music and literature.
- teaching about religion is supported in the Constitution; teaching expressions of religious belief (i.e. praying in the classroom) is not supported by the Constitution.

Fourth, teaching **about** religion provides a context for **respecting a wide variety of personal religious attitudes, traditions and convictions** that either support or oppose group activities such as dances or movies, discussions about current events or issues, and social traditions such as holidays and celebrations.

Fifth, appropriate and responsible treatment of religion as a significant element of curriculum **requires conscientious training of all staff members**. This document is designed to be a helpful resource for that purpose. (See Professional Development for Teachers, Section V.)

The Task Force feels strongly that these are important issues to address in the planning and delivery of teaching about religion in public school classrooms.

III. Common Questions and Answers[4]

Q. Is it constitutional to teach about religion in public schools?

A. Yes. In the 1960's school prayer cases (which ruled against state-sponsored school prayer and Bible reading), the U.S. Supreme Court indicated that public school education may include teaching about religion. In **Abington v. Schempp**, Associate Justice Tom Clark wrote for the Court:

> It might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment.

Q. What is meant by "teaching about religion" in the public school?

A. The following statements distinguish between teaching about religion in public schools and religious indoctrination:

- The school's approach to religion is **academic**, not **devotional**.
- The school may strive for student **awareness** of religions, but should not press for student **acceptance** of any one religion
- The school may sponsor **study** about religion, but may not sponsor the **practice** of religion.
- The school may **expose** students to a diversity of religious views, but may not impose any particular view.
- The school may **educate** about all religions, but may not **promote** or **denigrate** any religion.
- The school may **inform** the student about various beliefs, but should not seek to **conform** him or her to any particular belief.[5]

Q. Why should study about religion be included in the public school curriculum?

A. Because religion plays a significant role in history and society, study about religion is essential to understanding both the nation and the world. Omission of facts about religion can give students the false impression that the religious life of humankind is insignificant or unimportant. Failure to understand even the basic symbols, practices, and concepts of the various religions makes much of history, literature, art, and contemporary life unintelligible.

Study about religion is also important if students are to value religious liberty, the first freedom guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. Moreover, knowledge of the roles of religion in the past and present promotes cross-cultural understanding essential to democracy and world peace.

Q. Where does study about religion belong in the curriculum?

A. Wherever it naturally arises. On the secondary level, the social studies, literature, and the arts offer many opportunities for the inclusion of information about religions - their ideas and themes. On the elementary level, natural opportunities arise in discussions of the family and community life and in instruction about festivals and different cultures. Many educators believe that integrating study about religion into existing courses is an educationally sound way to acquaint students with the role of religion in history and society.

Religion also may be taught about in special courses or units. Some secondary schools, for example, offer such courses as world religions, the Bible as literature, and the religious literature of the West and of the East.

Q. Do current textbooks teach about religion?

A. Rarely. Recent textbook studies conclude that most widely used textbooks largely ignore the role of religion in history and society. For example, readers of high school U.S. history texts learn little or nothing about the great colonial revivals, the struggles of minority faiths, the religious motivations of immigrants, the contributions of religious groups to many social movements, major episodes of religious intolerance, and many other significant events of history. Education without appropriate attention to major religious influences and themes is incomplete education.

Q. How does teaching about religion relate to the teaching of values?

A. Teaching about religion is not the same as teaching values. The former is objective, academic study; the latter involves the teaching of particular ethical viewpoints or standards of behavior.

There are basic moral values that are recognized by the population at large (e.g., honesty, integrity, justice, compassion). These values can be taught in classes through discussion, by example, and by carrying out school policies. However, teachers may not invoke religious authority.

Public schools may teach about the various religious and non-religious perspectives concerning the many complex moral issues confronting society, but such perspectives must be presented without adopting, sponsoring, or denigrating one view against another.

Q. Is it constitutional to teach the biblical account of creation in the public schools?

A. Some states have passed laws requiring that creationist theory based on the biblical account be taught in the science classroom. The courts have found these laws to be unconstitutional on the ground that they promote a particular religious view. The Supreme Court has acknowledged, however, that a variety of scientific theories about origins can be appropriately taught in the science classroom. In **Edwards v. Aguillard**, the Court stated:

> Teaching a variety of scientific theories about the origins of humankind to school children might be validly done with the clear secular intent of enhancing the effectiveness of science instruction.

Though science instruction may not endorse or promote religious doctrine, the account of creation found in various scriptures may be discussed in a religious studies class or in any course that considers religious explanations for the origin of life.

Q. How should religious holidays be treated in the classroom?

A. Carefully. Religious holidays offer excellent opportunities to teach about religions in the elementary and secondary classroom. Recognition of and information about such holidays should focus on the origin, history, and generally agreed-upon meaning of the observances. If the approach is objective, neither advancing nor inhibiting religion, it can foster among students understanding and mutual respect within and beyond the local community.

IV. A Curriculum Framework For Teaching About Religion

The Task Force believes that the curriculum should foster a growing awareness and understanding of religion in the following contexts:

(1) major religions of the world,

(2) the role and influence of religion in the political and social development of geographical regions and civilizations of the world,

(3) religious themes in world art, literature, music, architecture, dress and other cultural artifacts and traditions,

(4) the role and influence of religion in the development of American history and society,

(5) the role and influence of religion in current local, national and international events and social issues.

Sample topics listed under each area provide a context for teaching about religion. Sample connections between these themes and the Oregon Curriculum Standards (Oregon Standards, May 1996) are indicated in bold type.

A. Major religions of the world (i.e. Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, Christianity, Islam)

- common characteristics
- beliefs, doctrines and codes of conduct
- origins
- rituals
- literature
- histories

Sample curriculum standard:

History: Use understanding of the chronological flow of human history to identify patterns of ideas and events over time.

B. The role and influence of religion in the political and social development of geographical regions and civilizations of the world

- religious influences in Middle Eastern cultures
- religious influences in Eastern cultures
- religious influences in Western cultures

Sample Curriculum Standard:

Geography: Identify the physical and human (cultural) characteristics of places and regions and how they change through time.

Geography: Explain how humans and the physical environment impact and influence each other.

History: Identify and explain causal relationships in history, describing how different perspectives affect interpretations.

C. Religious themes and symbols in world art, literature, music, architecture, dress and other cultural artifacts and traditions,

- great artists and great works of art
- great authors and great works of literature
- great composers and great works of music
- great architectural feats
- religious holidays
- social traditions
- family structures
- social roles and codes

Sample Curriculum Standards:

Literature: analyze how literary works both influence and are influenced by history, society, culture, and the author's life experiences.

Historical and Cultural Perspectives: Understand how works of art relate to the time periods and cultures in which they are created and how certain works of art from various time periods and cultures are related.

D. The role and influence of religion in the development of American history and society.

- principles and ideals of democracy
- U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.
- civic rights, responsibilities and codes of conduct
- social movements: Westward, women's, civil rights, hippie, human potential, men's

Sample Curriculum Standard:

Civics: Understand and apply knowledge about governmental and political systems, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

E. The role and influence of religion in current local, national and international events and social issues.

- religion and government
- religion and social culture
- religion and health
- religion and civic values
- religion and science
- religion and popular media

Sample curriculum standard:

Social Science Analysis: Design and implement strategies to analyze issues, explain perspectives and resolve issues using the social sciences.

Scientific Inquiry: Use interrelated processes to pose questions and investigate change to cultivate deeper understanding about the physical and living world.

History and Nature of Science: Understand the scientific world view, scientific inquiries, the nature of the scientific enterprise and the history of science as it relates to and clarifies scientific inquiries.

V. Professional Development for Teachers

The Task Force recommends three areas of focus for helping teachers appropriately teach for awareness and understanding about religion. Teachers should have (A) knowledge of religions and humanities integration, (B) guidelines for lesson design and delivery, (C) plans for developing school and community education, resources, and support.

A. Knowledge of religions and humanities integration should include study in:

1. Religions in all areas and civilizations of the world from prehistory to the present (i.e. history, literature, art, music, sociology).

2. Local and global social pluralism and religious diversity (i.e. religious factors in current local, national and international issues).

3. Methods of studying cultures and their religions (i.e. sociology, anthropology, linguistic analysis, comparative studies, etc.)

4. Legal allowances and constraints regarding religion studies in public education (i.e. legal cases, state law, local policy, etc.)

5. Sample units and lessons about religions that are consistent with Constitutional allowances for objectivity (i.e. non-devotional) and sample instructional activities and lessons that are prohibited by the Constitution (i.e. advance or inhibit religion).

B. Guidelines for lesson design and delivery should emphasize that:

1. Appropriate study about religions is academic in nature and stresses student awareness and understanding, not acceptance and/or conformity. Study should expose many views without imposing any one view. It should neither promote nor denigrate any religion.

2. Instructional goals and methods respect the inviolate character of students' individual religious beliefs and the rightful role of families and religious institutions in the religious and moral education of children. (i.e. It is appropriate in the classroom to hear, to study, and to discuss music and literature based on religious content within the guidelines of studying about religion; however, requiring students to express religious doctrine in musical or literary presentations is not appropriate.)

3. Subjects or teaching methods that may be appropriate for secondary students may not be appropriate for younger children. (i.e. objectivity, descriptive analysis, discussion techniques, instructional and community resources.)

4. Study about religions is to be conducted by qualified and certified teachers selected for their academic knowledge, their sensitivity for differing religious points of view, and their understanding of the Supreme Court's decisions pertaining to religious practices and study about religions in the public schools.

C. Plans for developing school and community education, resources, and support should assure that:

1. Texts and other teaching materials have been well-researched and made available for public review.

2. Resources include those from organizations and groups that specialize in developing and monitoring objective materials and approaches to teaching about religion.

3. Opportunities have been created for parents and community members to learn about the curriculum and instruction that support teaching and learning about religion.

4. What and how schools teach about religion is addressed in local policy and is clearly stated for teachers and parents.

5. Public schools have clear policy and procedures in place for accepting and dealing with complaints related to what and how topics are taught.

VI. Appendix

A. Legal Support For Definition

One of the first challenges in designing an academic curriculum for teaching about religion in public schools is to identify an adequate, comprehensive and practical definition of religion. The definitions suggested by most scholars can be placed in either of two categories, which they often refer to as "narrow" or "broad."

> "Narrow" definitions of religion typically stress the relation of the individual to a supreme being, institution beliefs and formal worship. "Broad" definitions, on the other hand, treat as religious any beliefs having to do with matters of "ultimate" concern--"the big questions," such as the meaning of life and humankind's place in the universe.

American courts of law have long wrestled with this problem. The development of judicial thinking on this subject illustrates the two approaches to defining religion. It also is instructive for those responsible for the policies of government-run schools, since they are subject to constitutional prohibitions against governmental sponsorship of or interference with religion. An older line of court cases emphasized the *transcendent* nature of the beliefs in question: belief systems based on the existence of a Supreme Being were treated as religious; others were not. But the modern approach to defining religion for constitutional purposes has emphasized the *function* which beliefs play in the life of the individual.

Thus in United States v. Seeger, 380 U.S. 163 (1965), the Court, interpreting the intent of Congress in granting a religious exemption from military service, held that religion is not limited to belief systems which entail a belief in God, but includes beliefs which occupy "a place in the life of the individual *parallel to* that filled by the orthodox belief in God."[6] The Court relied in part upon a statement by the Ecumenical Council:

> Men expect from the various religions answers to the riddles of the human condition: What is man? What is the meaning and purpose of our lives? What is the moral good and what is sin? What are death, judgment, and retribution after death?[7]

Subsequent lower court cases have followed the Supreme Court's lead. In Malnak v. Yogi, 592 F.2d 197 (1979), the Third Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals held that the teaching of the Science of Creative Intelligence (Transcendental Meditation) in public schools is unconstitutional. Judge Adams, concurring, discussed the history of constitutional doctrine on the question in the following way:

> It seems unavoidable, from Seeger, Welsh and Torcaso, that the Theistic formulation presumed to be applicable in the late nineteenth century cases is no longer sustainable. Under the modern view, "religion" is not confined to the relationship of man with his Creator, either as a matter of law or as a matter of

> theology. Even theologians of traditionally recognized faiths have moved away from a strictly Theistic approach in explaining their own religions. Such movement, when coupled with the growth in the United States of many Eastern and non-traditional belief systems, suggests that the older, limited definition would deny "religious" identification to faiths now adhered to by millions of Americans. The Court's more recent cases reject such a result.[8]

In the case of Torcaso v. Watkins, 367 U.S. 488 (1961), to which Judge Adams referred, the Supreme Court recognized that there are "religions in this country which do not teach what would generally be considered a belief in the existence of God [including] Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, Secular Humanism and others..."[9] Subsequent lower court cases are in accord."[10]

Judge Adams concluded that in the modern approach toward defining "religion" for constitutional purposes, the most important criterion is the nature of the ideas in question. If they relate to "ultimate" questions of life such as "the meaning of life and death, man's role in the universe, the proper moral code of right and wrong..., they should be treated as religious."[11]

The Oregon Court of Appeals has followed suit in the case of Christofferson v. Church of Scientology, 57 Or App 203 (1982). Said the court, "We find that, while beliefs relating to the existence of, and man's relationship to, a God are certainly prerequisite to finding that a belief is religious, "citing Torcaso v. Watkins, and Malnak v. Yogi, among other cases.[12]

> As Theodore Sizer, a well-known educational philosopher, has put it: One can construe "religion" as a person's Weltanschauung, the way he sees reality and his place in it. Every man tries to explain his presence, his birth and the question of his death; in this explanation, the argument runs, is his religion found.[13]

It may be added that each person's understanding of the world profoundly affects his or her orientation toward himself, toward others and toward the human community. Those who have found compelling reason for believing that there is value and dignity in being human, for instance, tend to treat themselves and others in certain ways; those who believe there is no higher meaning than the pursuit of money and power also tend to behave in accordance with that view.

Both "narrow" and "broad" definitions of religion take account of the effects which ultimate beliefs have on the behavior of individuals, groups and communities; the difference is that "broad" definitions recognize that even nontheistic ultimate

beliefs operate in the lives of individuals in the same ways that theistic beliefs operate.

Charles Whittier is the author of an important Report to Congress by the Congressional Research Service entitled, Religion in the Public Schools: Pluralism and Teaching About Religion.[14] In discussing the two basic approaches to the definition of religion, Whittier emphasizes the importance of being conversant with both approaches:

> The basic question then is whether and how the study of religions in the schools should include both the traditional historic religions and those secular or quasi-religious ideologies "which function as religions, according to the broad definition...." Too narrow a focus may unduly inhibit appreciation for the range and diversity of contemporary religious experience. Too broad a focus may result in a generalized and diffuse conception of religion, void of any distinctive religious content. A practicable solution proposed by two scholars centers in teacher preparation that avoids both religious and secularist bias; emphasizes a descriptive rather than prescriptive approach; and encourages students to reflect on what religion is by examining what the significant religious traditions are and what the relationship is between religion and culture. Students should be able to discriminate between the "narrow" and "broad" definitions and at least appreciate that "religious and non-religious enterprises are distinguishable."[15]

Accordingly, the Task Force recommends that teams become conversant with both approaches to defining religion and that both approaches be brought into the discussion of the roles which religion has played and which it continues to play in human affairs.

VI. Appendix

B. Policy Guidelines

A study of school district policy statements indicate that they include most, if not all, of the following components:[16]

1. **Importance of study about religion in good education**. Some discussion should be presented on the critical role of religion in human culture and on its importance for a balanced understanding of civilization and society.

2. **Legal parameters for the treatment of religion in the curriculum**. It is essential that a clear distinction be made between the academic study of religion and religious indoctrination and devotional practice. Also, there should be some summary of Supreme Court decisions that clarify whether a particular activity falls within constitutional boundaries, specifically the three-part test set forth in Lemon v. Kurtzman: first, the activity must have a secular purpose (in this case, education); second, the principal or primary effect of the activity must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion (the dictation of policy by government/school officials regarding matters of religious practice).

3. **Points at which study about religion may be found within the school program**. These are the curriculum areas in which the topic of religion is often included (social studies, literature); and the arts (music with religious content, art with religious iconography, etc.).

4. **Use of community resources/personnel for instructional purposes**. This component should clarify how and when local clergy or other qualified laypersons may be involved as resource persons in class instruction.

5. **Participation of school groups in community religious activities**. Guidelines should be established for school choir and band performance as part of community worship services, for example, a community wide Easter sunrise service.

6. **Observance of religious holidays**. There should be clarification of which civil holidays are to be reflected in school activities; what such recognition means in terms of program (whether religious music, symbolism, or readings are to be used); and efforts to include treatment of non-Christian religious holiday traditions.

7. **Provision for excuses without penalty for students from participation in activities involving religion**. Having such a provision guarantees the right of nonparticipation in the performance of drama, music, or dance whose content would be personally offensive and should allow alternative activities to be

pursued. Provision should also be made for excusing students from patriotic observances that violate their religious beliefs. In addition, there should be provision for excuse without penalty for both students and faculty for attendance at major holiday worship services.

This provision allows faculty to observe their religion without loss of salary and students to do so without lowering their grades as long as they make up classwork and tests.

8. **Use of school facilities by groups with religious orientation.** This issue is less controversial now since the U.S. Congress passed legislation in 1984 allowing bona fide student groups with predominantly religious concerns to use school facilities for meetings before or after school. No doubt additional court decisions will be necessary to define what criteria will determine when one group is allowed the use of school facilities while another is denied. In a related area, school board policy ought to decide if non-student religious groups will be allowed to rent or otherwise make use of school facilities.

9. **Baccalaureate services, commencements, and other ceremonial occasions.** The policy should clarify the school district's position on the sponsorship and location of baccalaureate services if they are predominantly religious in nature; also, whether invocations and benedictions are appropriate at commencements or other ceremonial occasions.

10. **Provision for grievance procedures.** There should be clearly specified procedures and appeal channels for filing complaints regarding alleged constitutional violations in school practices involving religion.

VI. Appendix

C. Including Studies About Religion in the Curriculum

A Position Statement and Guidelines
from the
National Council for the Social Studies
Adopted November, 1984

The National Council for the Social Studies in its Statement on Essentials of the Social Studies declares that:

> Students need a knowledge of the world at large and the world at hand, the world of individuals and the world of institutions, the world past and the world present and future.[1]

Religions have influenced the behavior of both individuals and nations, and have inspired some of the world's most beautiful art, architecture, literature and music. History, our own nation's religious pluralism and contemporary world events are testimony that religion has been and continues to be an important cultural value. The NCSS Curriculum Guidelines state that "the social studies program should draw from currently valid knowledge representative of human experience, culture, and beliefs."[2] The study about religions, then, has "a rightful place in the public school curriculum because of the pervasive nature of religious beliefs, practices, institutions and sensitivities."[3]

Knowledge about religions is not only a characteristic of an educated person but is also absolutely necessary for understanding and living in a world of diversity. Knowledge of religious differences and the role of religion in the contemporary world can help promote understanding and alleviate prejudice. Since the purpose of the social studies is to provide students with a knowledge of the world that has been, the world that is and the world of the future, studying about religions should be an essential part of the social studies curriculum. Omitting study about religions gives students the impression that religions have not been and are not now part of the human experience. Study about religions may be dealt with in special courses and units or wherever and whenever knowledge of the religious dimension of human history and culture is needed for a balanced and comprehensive understanding.

In its 1963 decision in the case of *Abington v. Schempp*, the United States Supreme Court declared that study about religions in the nation's public schools is both legal and desirable. Justice Tom Clark writing the majority decision stated:

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[1]Statement on Essentials of the Social Studies. *Social Education* 45 3 March 1981. p. 163.
[2]A Revision of the NCSS Social Studies Curriculum Guidelines. Social Education 43 4 April 1979. p. 268.
[3]William E. Colhe and Lee H. Smith "Teaching About Religion in the Schools: The Continuing Challenge." Social Education 45 1 January 1981. p.16.

In addition, it might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historical qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment.

Justice William Brennan in a concurring opinion wrote:

> The holding of the Court today plainly does not foreclose teaching about the Holy Scriptures or about the differences between religious sects in classes in literature and history. Indeed, whether or not the Bible is involved, it would be impossible to teach meaningfully many of the subjects in the social sciences or the humanities without some mention of religion.

If the public schools are to provide students with a comprehensive education in the studies, academic study about religions should be a part of the curriculum.

Guidelines

1. Study about religions should strive for awareness and understanding the diversity of religions, religious experiences, religious expressions and the reasons for particular expressions of religious beliefs within a society or culture.

2. Study about religions should stress the influence of religions on history, culture, the arts and contemporary issues.

3. Study about religions should permit and encourage a comprehensive and balanced examination of the entire spectrum of ideas and attitudes pertaining to religion as a component of human culture.

4. Study about religions should investigate a broad range, both geographic and chronological, of religious beliefs, practices and values.

5. Study about religions should examine the religious dimension of human experience in its broader cultural context, including its relation to economic, political, and social institutions as well as its relation to the arts, language and culture.

6. Study about religions should deal with the world's religions from the same perspective (i.e. beginnings, historical development, sacred writings, beliefs, practices, values and impact on history, culture, contemporary issues and the arts).

7. Study about religions should be objective.

8. Study about religions should be academic in nature, stressing student awareness and understanding, not acceptance and/or conformity.

9. Study about religions should emphasize the necessity and importance of tolerance, respect and mutual understanding in a nation and world of diversity.

10. Study about religions should be descriptive, non-confessional and conducted in an environment free of advocacy.

11. Study about religions should seek to develop and utilize the various skills, attitudes and abilities that are essential to history and the social sciences (i.e. locating, classifying and interpreting data; keen observation; critical reading, listening and thinking; questioning; and effective communication).

12. Study about religions should be academically responsible and pedagogically sound, utilizing accepted methods and materials of the social sciences, history and literature.

13. Study about religions should involve a range of materials that provide a balanced and fair treatment of the subject, and distinguish between confessional and historical fact.

14. Study about religions should be conducted by qualified and certified teachers selected for their academic knowledge, their sensitivity for differing religious points of view, and their understanding of the Supreme Court's decisions pertaining to religious practices and study about religions in the public schools.

VI. Appendix

D. The Williamsburg Charter – Summary of Principles

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

The Religious Liberty clauses of the First Amendment to the Constitution are a momentous decision, the most political decision for religious and public justice in history. Two hundred years after their enactment they stand out boldly in a century made dark by state repression and sectarian conflict. Yet the ignorance and contention now surrounding the clauses are a reminder that their advocacy and defense is a task for each succeeding generation.

We acknowledge our deep and continuing differences over religious beliefs, political policies and constitutional interpretations. But together we celebrate the genius of the Religious Liberty clauses, and affirm the following truths to be among the first principles that are in the shared interest of all Americans;

1. Religious liberty, or freedom of conscience, is a precious, fundamental and inalienable right. A society is only as just and free as it is respectful of this right for its smallest minorities and least popular communities.

2. Religious liberty is founded on the inviolable dignity of the person. It is not based on science or social usefulness and is not dependent on the shifting moods of majorities and governments.

3. Religious liberty is our nation's "first liberty," which undergirds all other rights and freedoms secured by the Bill of Rights.

4. The two Religious Liberty clauses address distinct concerns, but together they serve same end—religious liberty, or freedom of conscience, for citizens of all faiths or none.

5. The No establishment clause separates Church from State but not religion from politics or public life. It prevents the confusion of religion and government which has been a leading source of repression and coercion throughout history.

6. The Free exercise clause guarantees the right to reach, hold, exercise or change beliefs freely. It allows all citizens who so desire to shape their lives, whether private or public, on the basis of personal and communal beliefs.

7. The Religious Liberty clauses are both a protection of individual liberty and a provision for ordering the relationship of religion and public life. They allow us to live with our deepest differences and enable diversity to be a source of national strength.

8. Conflict and debate are vital to democracy. Yet if controversies about religion and politics are to reflect the highest wisdom of the First Amendment and advance the best interests of the disputants and the nation, then *how* we debate, and not only *what* we debate, is critical.

9. One of America's continuing needs is to develop, out of our differences, a common vision for the common good. Today that common vision must embrace a shared understanding of the place of religion in public life and of the guiding principles by which people with deep religious differences can contend robustly but civilly with each other.

10. Central to the notion of the common good, and of greater importance each day because of the increase of pluralism, is the recognition that religious liberty is a universal right joined to a universal duty to respect that right. Rights are best guarded and responsibilities best exercised when each person and group guards for all others those rights they wish guarded for themselves.

We are firmly persuaded that these principles require a fresh consideration, and that the reaffirmation of religious liberty is crucial to sustain a free people that would remain free. We therefore commit ourselves to speak, write and act according to this vision and these principles. We urge our fellow citizens to do the same, now and in generations to come.

VII. Resources & References related to Religion in the Curriculum

A. Endnotes

[1] Whittier, Charles H. (1989). Religion in the Public Schools: Pluralism and Teaching about Religions. Congressional Research Service, the Library of Congress.

[2] For legal support, see "How is Religion Defined" in Appendix VI.a.

[3] From Religion in the Public School Curriculum: Questions and Answers. Sponsored jointly by: American Academy of Religion, American Association of School Administrators, American Federation of Teachers, American Jewish Congress, Americans United Research Foundation, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Christian Legal Society, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, National Association of Evangelicals, National Conference of Christians and Jews, National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, National Council on Religion and Public Education, National Council for the Social Studies, National Education Association, National School Boards Association.

[4] From Religion in the Public School Curriculum © The Williamsburg Charter Foundation, 1988.

[5] This answer is based on guidelines originally published by the Public Education Religion Studies Center at Wright State University.

[6] 380 U.S. at 176 (emphasis added).

[7] 380 U.S. at 182.

[8] 592 F.2d. at 207.

[9] 367 U.S. at 495, footnote 11.

[10] See, for example, Grove v. Mead School District No. 354, 753 F. 2d 1528, 1534 (1985), where the Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals stated that "Secular humanism may be a religion," citing Rhode Island Federation of Teachers v. Norbert, 630 F.2d 850, 854

[11] 592 F.2d at 208. See also Africa v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 662 F.2d 1025 (First Circuit 1981); and Dettmer v. Landon, 799 F.2d 929 (Fourth Circuit 1986)

[12] 57 Or App at 240

[13] Theodore R. Sizer, ed., Religion and Public Education, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967, p. xvii. Dr. Sizer is developer of the Re: Learning Project and founder of the Coalition of Essential Schools, a nation-wide educational reform and restructuring movement, at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.

[14] Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, February 15, 1989.

[15] CRS Report for Congress, Pp. 8-9. Citations omitted.

[16] From "Teaching About Religion in the Public Schools" by Charles R. Kniker. Phi Delta Kappa Fastback Series #224, 1985.

VII. Resources & References related to Religion in the Curriculum

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D. Organizations and Curriculum Projects

First Liberty Institute, George Mason University, 4210 Roberts Road, Fairfax, VA 22032 (703) 503-8504

National Council on Religion and Public Education, 451 Sutton Hall, Indiana, PA 15701 (412) 357-2310

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